



## Project AWARE: Float Trip with a Purpose

by Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

As another canoe slid over the shallow, rocky riffle, it glided into deeper water. For a second. With a metallic 'thump,' it hit another rock and hung up. The current turned it broadside. It wavered for a moment before spilling its human cargo waist deep into the Maquoketa River above Manchester. Barb Cooley, of Dubuque, was stoic, but unharmed by the cold water dip as she and her partner pulled the canoe over to the shore checkpoint. Just another watery casualty from Project AWARE, held June 1-8 on the Maquoketa River.

About 50 participants started the event and are joined by a few day-trippers as their flotilla moved through Jones, Delaware, and Jackson counties toward the confluence with the Mississippi River. Most were experienced canoeists and expected to get wet. And there was plenty of it, as they skirted snags, sweepers and 'cross stream' fences on the Maquoketa. Mixing recreation and scenery with environmental awareness, organizers foresee making it an annual event.

"The event went great," pronounced Brian Soenen, IOWATER Coordinator with the Department of Natural Resources, who developed the idea over the last few months. "The physical dictates might have been a little much, but everyone reacted well. With these things, you plan the best you can and adjust accordingly." Working with the DNR's Keepers of the Land volunteer program, county conservation boards, various sponsors and support people, paddlers bucked low water and light rain showers.

The Maquoketa water level had dropped four inches since a scouting trip a week prior. That meant frequent interruptions, to portage canoes and cargo on the shallower upper stretch. Adding to the mix was the weight of abandoned tires, lawn chairs, metal scraps, even a rusty hog waterer, found along the way. Newly strung fences, including a couple electric ones, also became hurdles. By late afternoon of the first day though, the river deepened and widened.

"The idea of the cleanup came to me while listening to Chad Pegracke at a Volunteers in Natural Resources Conference," explained



*A variety of trash was pulled from the Maquoketa River.*

(continued on page 3)

## *...from IOWATER'S Coordinator*

Introducing ... Me ... Again!

My first article debuted in the 2002 spring newsletter – I wrote it to officially introduce myself to the IOWATER family. Today, I am very proud to reintroduce myself as the IOWATER Coordinator. The time I've spent thus far with IOWATER has truly been incredible.

The ancient Roman writer Evenius once wrote, "The crowd gives the leader new strength." It's as true today as it was when it was written. Throughout the past year, I've had the opportunity to meet, greet and work with many of you. The dedication, motivation, patience, and passion of IOWATER volunteers is unmatched by any others. Your contributions to the IOWATER program, the state of Iowa, and to your communities continue to uphold the IOWATER mission, "To protect and improve Iowa's water quality..."

It has also been said that an army is only as strong as its weakest soldier. Fortunately, the hard work and commitment from my IOWATER coworkers, Jacklyn Gautsch and Lynette Seigley, and from supervisor Mary Skopec, provide a solid foundation for the program. With the guidance and input of the IOWATER committees, volunteers, and the Iowa DNR's Water Monitoring Section, we will continue the evolution of the IOWATER program and strive to meet tomorrow's challenges, today.



**Brian Soenen**

## **IOWATER Survey Prize Winners**

If your ticket number is listed below, call Jackie at 515-281-4476 to claim your prize! Prizes not claimed by August 31st will be redrawn.

<b>Prize</b>	<b>Number</b>
tan denim IOWATER shirt	385030
blue denim IOWATER shirt	385580
IOWATER bucket hat	385939
IOWATER baseball hat	385559
IOWATER coffee mug	385320
cream IOWATER T-shirt	385370
blue IOWATER long-sleeved shirt	384810

**Surprise!** Thanks to the creative eye of Iowa DNR publication designer Pat Lohmann, and to the economy of in-house printing, the IOWATER newsletter has been adorned with a technicolor dreamcoat – at about the same overall cost of our previous newsletters. We hope you enjoy the new style and encourage you to share the information with others. Happy Reading!



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**IOWATER Web Site: [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net)**

## Project Aware (cont)

Soenen. "If everybody would do their part, we would really see an improvement in the streams." Pegracke is a nationally acclaimed river cleanup legend, who has pulled many tons of debris from the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. More importantly, he has spurred hundreds of volunteers to follow his lead.

Besides the floating trash detail, participants collected water quality samples along the way. "Things like

clarity, dissolved oxygen levels, nitrates, flow rates, the 'canopy' above, even the substrate (river bottom) and bugs that

are found in sample areas," detailed DNR geologist Lynette Seigley of Iowa City. "They help point to the water quality." Some canoeists were water quality volunteers back in their hometowns, testing and advising state water officials about streams in their communities.



*Chemical and biological monitoring was done throughout the week.*



Participants sat through various evening programs offered each day. Geologist Mary Skopec offered an outline of stream and lake quality, especially tied to levels of nutrients coming off the watershed into streams and lakes. "Think of these things while you are going downstream," challenged Skopec, also of Iowa City and the DNR's Geological Survey. "Look at pipes ending in the stream. Observe the tributaries as they empty into the river; some will run clear. Some flow in muddy."

More than 'just' a floating classroom, though, the surroundings make the trip worth the toil. Pat Schlarbaum pointed just off the stream bank where a Common Yellowthroat serenaded passing canoeists. While not rare, the small warbler was a bonus among all the deep green foliage on the trip. Schlarbaum kept his eyes peeled for signs of river otters. Paddlers are also assessing the merits of their crafts; from a 40-plus year old fiberglass Crestliner to kayak-type one-person deck canoes.

If it seemed like vacation to the participants...it was. They just learned and improved the river, as they went.

*Project Aware photos by Clay Smith (cover, p. 1 & 3) and Lynette Seigley (p. 3 top, right).*

Project AWARE information (photos, statistics, 2004 expedition, etc.) will be updated randomly throughout the coming months. Be sure to bookmark the official Project AWARE website at [www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/aware.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/aware.html) and check periodically for updates. The 2004 Project AWARE is scheduled for June 19 – 26. Location and details to be announced sometime within the next 11 months.



# Volunteer Viewpoints

... in their own words.



## God's Gift of Water

by Rev. Sam Hamilton-Poore

I serve the Presbytery of North Central Iowa as its advocate for issues related to environmental justice. The Presbyterian churches within North Central Iowa range from Mason City to Ames, Fort Dodge to Waterloo, and places in-between. The Mission, Justice, and Stewardship Committee of NCI recently voted to make "water quality" a major emphasis of the presbytery in the coming years. This decision was based, in large part, on responses to an "Eco-Justice Questionnaire."

As its environmental justice advocate, my work will be to assist the presbytery and its congregations in taking action to care for God's gift of water. The following are a few thoughts I shared with my presbytery on why we, as Christians, have a responsibility to care for this gift.

Water is one of God's most important gifts for nurturing and sustaining life. It is the miracle of liquid water that most distinguishes this planet from every other body in the solar system. (Water exists on other planets, if at all, in the form of either vapor or ice.) With liquid water, there is life in all its richness and complexity. Without, nothing lives. If we care about life in any form (human, animal, plant), then we must take care of the water that God provides to make life possible.

Water is also one of God's most important gifts, we believe, for nurturing and sustaining our life in Christ. Following Christ's command, we baptize with water. In the waters of baptism we are buried with Christ in his death; from the waters of baptism we are raised to share in Christ's resurrection.

We usually ask about water, "Is it safe to drink?" But Christians should also ask, "Is it fit for baptism?" If not, why not?

Caring for water is one of the most important ways to care for our neighbor. Wherever we live – especially in Iowa – there is always someone else living downstream. That "someone else" may be the next farm, the next town, the next wildlife area, or the next state.

What is the quality of the water that we pass on to them after we have used it for recreation, agriculture, industry, or housekeeping? Are we creating problems for our neighbors downstream by the ways in which we use our water? Is God's blessing to us of water still a blessing by the time it reaches our neighbors?

The Presbytery of North Central Iowa recognizes IOWATER as a very concrete, direct, and measurable way for churches to care for God's gift of water. [First Presbyterian Church of Mason City has sponsored a water monitoring team for the last three years.] To encourage more churches to become involved, the presbytery is now providing scholarships to IOWATER training.

Thanks to everyone at IOWATER!



## Grants Sponsor Prairie High School Monitors

### Students Learn / Community Benefits

article and photos by Sharon Bender

In 2000, a Water Quality Monitoring Project was started at Prairie High School in Cedar Rapids, IA to allow students the opportunity to explore the status of Iowa's waters, particularly those in Prairie Creek, and to report their findings to businesses in the Cedar Rapids community, the Iowa Geological Survey, the Iowa DNR and the IOWATER database on the Internet. Grant monies amounting to \$17,900 were written for and obtained from local and state businesses and agencies (See table below).

Over 175 high school students in biology, ecology, and earth/space science classes collected, analyzed, and documented stream water quality at three locations (Rural, Urban and Industrial) on Prairie Creek. For the past 3 years the students have been gathering data on the biological components and stream habitat in the fall and spring, and monthly, they obtain data on the physical characteristics and water chemistry and discover how land use practices impact water quality. We conservatively estimate that our students have spent over 3,100 hours in volunteer water quality monitoring for the state of Iowa in the past 3 years. Data gathered have been reported to the IOWATER database on the Internet.



*Prairie High School students join student teacher Tammy Sass in an IOWATER Level One Workshop.*



Grant Awards received:	Amount
ComServ Iowa Grant 2000	\$2,300
Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation Educator Grant	\$3,000
Cargill Corn Milling Water Matters Grant	\$6,600
Wal-Mart Environmental Grant	\$5,000
IOWA Showcase on Educational Technology Grant (Star Schools)	\$1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,900</b>

*Grants totaling nearly \$18,000 were awarded to Sharon Bender's class to help finance their monitoring efforts.*



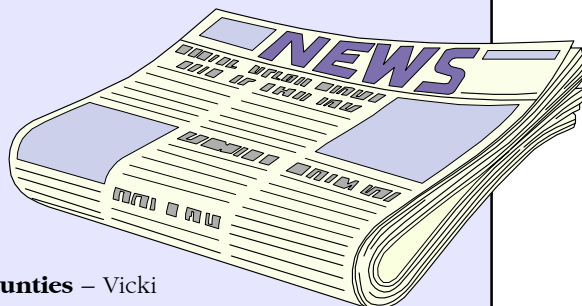
*Laura Volesky investigates a turtle she found while searching for benthic macroinvertebrates in Prairie Creek.*

Students present their findings using PowerPoint and video production (movies made with i-movie) on an annual basis to an audience of interested citizens, administrators, state and federal agencies, and business partners. This year, the students will present to the Linn County Soil and Water Conservation Board. Recently, five of the students have become Level 1 certified as IOWATER water quality monitors and plan to continue volunteer monitoring after graduation.

We'd like to hear from you, so  
**send us a note...**  
 about your  
 IOWATER activities,  
 thoughts, and  
 ideas **...in your own words.**

# IOWATER Action!

*Press releases, events, & news articles involving IOWATER monitors – Many thanks to all of you for your continued efforts.*



- **Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Chickasaw and Fayette counties** – Vicki Wilson, Tammy Turner and others organized the Wapsi Watershed Snapshot sampling.
- **Bremer County** – Tammy Turner, Bremer County Naturalist, used the IOWATER program with school classes in Bremer County.
- **Cedar County** – Cedar County Soil and Water Conservation District organized the Cedar County Snapshot.
- **Cedar River Watershed** – Numerous volunteers from the Minnesota border to Conesville participated in the Cedar River Snapshot.
- **Clayton County** – Steve Veysey and the Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association used IOWATER data collected on South Cedar Creek at a public hearing in Garnavillo. Tri-Star FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to promote and maintain clean water in northeast Iowa.
- **Clinton County** – The Clinton County Conservation Board organized the Clinton County Snapshot.
- **Dallas County** – Dallas County Conservation Board Naturalists participated in the statewide snapshot sampling, and involved Dallas county citizens with their testing.
- **Delaware, Jackson and Jones counties** – Mike Kilen followed Project A.W.A.R.E. and provided an inspirational story about the trip.
- **Freeborn County (MN)** – Scott Marpe hosted two seventh grade life science classes at his IOWATER site as part of an Earth Day activity.
- **Hancock County** – Tammy Brant, Garner Parks and Recreation, and Jason Lackore, Hancock County Naturalist, shared the IOWATER program with Environmental Studies students from Garner.
- **Howard County** – Riceville FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to monitor stream water quality in the Riceville area.
- **Jasper County** – Diamond Trail FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to conduct conservation activities on their chapter farm, park and arboretum. Lynnville-Sully FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to test water quality on the North Skunk River.
- **Johnson County** – James Martin and the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District encouraged IOWATER monitors in Johnson County to sample their sites on May 24.
- **Jones County** – Both the Anamosa FFA and Midland FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to test additional streams, start a mentor program for fourth graders, and complete a Wapsi River Clean-up project.
- **Monona and Woodbury counties** – Maple Valley FFA received a \$2,000 Farm Bureau grant to test water quality in Monona and Woodbury counties.
- **Muscatine County** – The Muscatine County Conservation Board, the Muscatine Soil and Water Conservation District and the Mud Creek Water Quality Project organized the Muscatine County Snapshot.
- **O'Brien County** – Scott Osborne, Terry Janssen, Mark Bohner coordinated the O'Brien County Snapshot.
- **Polk County** – Elizabeth Horton Plasket, Executive Director of the Iowa Environmental Council, mentioned IOWATER in a conservation article.
- **Poweshiek County** – Judie Krebsbach, project coordinator for Arbor Lake Watershed Project, hosted an IOWATER demonstration at Arbor Lake on Earth Day.
- **Scott County** – Ed Askew, Heidi Carr, Carol Border, and Curtis Lundy spread the word about the Bettendorf trainings and the Scott County Snapshot.
- **Statewide** – The countless individuals who participated in a county or watershed snapshot sampling in their area this spring or participated in the statewide sampling May 24.
- **Story County** – Mahdi Al-Kaisi, Soil Management Specialist with Iowa State University Extension, included the IOWATER program in a list of conservation plans for land managers and farmers.
- **Whitebreast Creek Watershed** – Angela Biggs and Anne Hildebrand organized the Whitebreast Creek Snapshot.

*Compiled by Jacklyn Gautsch, IOWATER Field Coordinator  
If we missed your happenings, please call or email Jackie with an update.*

## IOWATER 2003 Level I Workshop Schedule

Date	Location	To Register, Contact	Phone	E-mail
Aug 1, 5 – 9 p.m. Aug 2, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Bettendorf <i>Surrey Heights Fire Station</i>	Jeff West	(563) 332-3113	JKWEST3@aol.com
Aug 11, 5 – 10 p.m. Aug 12, 5 – 10 p.m.	Fort Dodge <i>Bob Heun Shelter; J.F. Kennedy Park</i>	Karen Hansen	(515) 576-4258	khansen@webstercountya.org
Aug 15, 5 – 9 p.m. Aug 16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Williamsburg <i>Kirkwood College Center</i>	Maria Koschmeyer, Iowa CCB	(319) 655-8466	iccbec@netins.net
Sept 12, 5 – 9 p.m. Sept 13, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Grinnell <i>Grinnell College</i>	Judie Krebsbach, Poweshiek SWCD	(641) 528-2065	jkrebsba@iamalcom.fsc.usda.gov



### IOWATER Advanced Workshops\* REGISTRATION FORM

*\*To participate in an advanced workshop, you must have attended a Level 1 workshop.*

The registration fee is \$10 for each of the advanced workshops. This covers all program fees, meals, and testing equipment. To register for any of these modules, please complete and send in this registration form. (It is also a good idea to make a copy for your records.) You will be sent confirmation, maps, and more information when paid registrations are received.

#### **Water Ecology Module (Indicate the workshop of your choice.)**

_____ July 18	6 - 10 p.m.	Nishna Bend Recreation Area, Harlan
_____ August 22	6 - 10 p.m.	Dolliver State Park, Webster Co. (South Shelter)
_____ September 19	6 - 10 p.m.	Kirkwood Community College Center, Williamsburg

#### **Secondary Educators Module (Indicate the workshop of your choice.)**

_____ July 19	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Nishna Bend Recreation Area, Harlan
_____ August 23	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Dolliver State Park, Webster Co. (South Shelter)
_____ September 20	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Kirkwood Community College Center, Williamsburg

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or PO Box City, State, ZIP

Phone: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening): \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Checks are payable to Iowa DNR (\$10 for each advanced workshop)

**Send To: Jacklyn Gautsch – IOWATER**  
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## **IOWATER**

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502 E. 9th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50319



## *Project* **AWARE**

**Wet,  
Wonderful,  
a real Workout,  
& a Whole lot of trash**

***Float trip on the Maquoketa River mixes recreation  
with environmental awareness and cleanup.***